

commencement-reunion

Supplement to the Summer 1997 Oberlin Alumni Magazine

1997



reunion **1997** classes

class of 1927

70th Reunion

•

class of 1932

65th Reunion

•

class of 1937

60th Reunion

•

class of 1942

55th Reunion

•

class of 1947

50th Reunion

•

class of 1972

25th Reunion

reunion clusters

class of 1961, 1962, 1963

35th Reunion

•

class of 1981, 1982, 1983

15th Reunion

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Published by the Oberlin College Office of Communications. Editorial Office: Oberlin Alumni Magazine, Bosworth 101, 50 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074-1089. Phone: (216)775-8182. Fax: (216)775-6843. E-mail: alummag@ocvaxc.cc.oberlin.edu URL: www.oberlin.edu/~alummag/alum_mag.html



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the imamoto *sisters*— together again

Alice Imamoto Takemoto '47 was a talented 16-year-old piano student when she arrived at the conservatory in 1943. She and her older sister Grace had just been released from an internment camp in Arkansas, one of 10 military establishments West Coast Japanese citizens were forced to enter at the beginning of WWII. By mid-1942, the government began allowing students to attend college—outside military areas. Oberlin was widely recognized as a Nisei-friendly college, so Alice applied and was accepted.

Grace, who had only three credit hours remaining to qualify for her degree at Berkeley when she was evacuated, worked as a domestic in Minneapolis until Alice was ready to leave for Oberlin. Once on campus, she took a job as assistant cook at Grad House to pay for the small room in a private home they shared, and managed to earn the credit hours for her Berkeley degree.

Alice worked summers in a hot Cleveland factory with other Japanese Americans making checkbooks. “. . . they were fast,” Alice recalls. “I couldn’t keep up the pace and after several weeks was fired! I found another lousy job typing envelopes. I can honestly say that there was never time to have any fun the entire four years. It was such hard work. But I made good friends.”

Alice went on to a position in the Music Copyright Division of the Library of Congress, where she worked for seven years. She performs extensively in chamber music concerts, and teaches both privately and at the preparatory department of American University.

Grace, (now Grace Imamoto Noda) attended her sister’s 50th reunion, welcoming the opportunity not only to visit with her, but to renew friendships the sisters had made together so many years ago.

—MC



PHOTO BY CLYDE OWAN '79



keeping the *faith*

Entertaining the reunion picnickers on North Campus Bowl Saturday afternoon was bluegrass and traditional folk musician Dwain Story '63. Now a Chicago resident, where he performs regularly at clubs and coffeehouses, Dwain will be remembered by Oberlin alums as a member of the Plum Creek Boys, one of the first college groups to champion bluegrass music in the late 1950s and early '60s. He went on to a career as a professional folk musician as did Phil Specht, another former Plum Creek boy recording two albums with his own band, the Knob Lick Upper 10,000.

With his strong mountain tenor and fine flat-picking guitar, Dwain set toes tapping and children dancing with such old-time favorites as "Jesse James" and "Praise the Lord, I Saw the Light," Woody Guthrie's "The Great Philadelphia Lawyer," and his own "A Little Lovin'," which he recorded in 1964 with the Loving Spoonful.

"I always hope that folk music will become as popular as it was in the 1960s," said the 56-year-old Kentucky native. "But I know there'll always be folks like me who keep it alive." —KS

The Changing Face of Oberlin College

It all began with Tappan Square, the 13-acre village green originally intended as the site of Oberlin College and still the physical heart of the College and the town. But the face of Oberlin continues to evolve, as Danforth Professor of History Geoffrey Blodgett '53 explained in his popular lecture, "Changing Architecture on the Oberlin College Campus."

Highlighting his whirlwind, slide-show tour of Oberlin's architectural and social history were the past contributions of Charles Grandison Finney (First Church), ALCOA founder Charles Martin Hall (modern-day Tappan Square), and architect Cass Gilbert (Finney Chapel, Cox Administration Building, Allen Memorial Art Museum, and the Bosworth Quadrangle). But Jeff also stressed the commitment of former College president S. Frederick Starr to historic preservation, which he said "exceeded that of all past presidents of Oberlin put together."

Most notable among Starr's contributions—which include most of the recent physical changes on campus—Jeff noted the 1996-97 renovation of Peters Hall; the 1980's renovation of the Johnson House, Tank Hall and the Charles Martin Hall House; and the 1987 addition to Tappan Square of the South India-inspired Clark Bandstand.

Looking beyond the campus, Jeff applauded the newly-restored Westervelt Hall on Oberlin's South Main Street, now the New Union Center for the Arts, purchased and renovated by the Nord Family Foundation in 1996.

multi-mono-

culturalism or pluralism?

Alumni, graduating seniors, faculty, current students—nearly every group in Oberlin during Commencement-Reunion Weekend was represented in the crowd participating in the symposium “Integration, Gender Equality, or Diversity?”

In their opening remarks, panelists Robert Sherman '61 and Mark Rosenthal '72 spoke of the Oberlin they remember—a place where racism and segregation did not occur, and where individuals were treated with respect and dignity. They agreed that the Oberlin they see reflected in the *OAM*, the *Review*, and national media is not the Oberlin they attended.



Rather than diversity, all colleges and universities, including Oberlin, have what Bob called “multiple monocultures,” the “Oberlin ideal turned upside down.” Mark sees an “Oberlin in turmoil,” reflected by alumni as well as students; an Oberlin “diametrically opposed” to the one he remembers and believed in.

Not everyone shared their memories. “I think you’ve forgotten what Oberlin was like when we were here,” said one Class of 1972 member. “There was a lot of insensitivity and ignorance.” Nancy Cooper '51 recalled an Oberlin that had little room for diverse beliefs, noting President Stevenson’s address to her freshmen class on Oberlin’s Christian character. “We were so Caucasian, so Protestant, so white,” she recalled.

Student panelist Steffany Haaz, a sophomore, thought Oberlin would be Utopia, but she found segregation and misunderstanding. People talk about pain, suffering, and transcendence with others of their own cultures, she said, but people of different backgrounds never talk about those things with one another. “. . . we seem to think the way to fight the imbalance [of power] is to faction off into separate groups to fight for ‘our’ rights to the exclusion of others,” she said. Her experiences have made her want to work to end such thinking.

Booker Peek '66, a professor of African-American studies at Oberlin, noted his fellow panelists’ invocation of Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of a society in which people would be judged solely on the content of their characters. He knew that everyone on the panel—and surmised that everyone in the room—found King’s dream worthwhile. But we disagree on how to attain it, he said. “We can’t move to a color blind society just because that’s what we want. What we *can* do is build a bridge from where we are to where we want to be. . . . We prolong our agony by not realizing that it will be done incrementally.”

The subjects of self-segregation and program houses were repeatedly invoked. Some characterized “ethnically-based” houses as edifices of identity politics that should be immediately abolished; others as safe spaces that they hoped would someday be unnecessary. Cooper, former dean of residential life, described all program houses as vibrant, welcoming places, not at all the “walled fortresses” of monolithic thought they’re made out to be. A student wondered why dorms that have traditionally attracted specific groups—male jocks or white hippies, for instance—are not subjected to similar scrutiny.

The tendency toward stridency that some noted in campus discourse, while disturbing, is evidence, said Professor of Sociology Bill Norris, that discussion of ideas and ideals still occurs on campus. He agreed with Booker's assessment that many problems cited as the result of society's increasing stratification are actually due to society's progress—we are at an intermediate phase in our move toward true equity.

The professors also agreed that Oberlin continues to move forward, a belief supported by a statement in Steffany's opening remarks: "I came here looking for Utopia, but I didn't find it. I guess I'll just have to make my own."
—CN

straight out of *cyberspace*

An Oberlin reunion brings old friends together to rejoice in the renewal of shared experiences. But what is the proper term for a gathering of Obies who know each other well, yet have never seen each others' handsome faces?

We never came up with a name, but several Obies were part of just such a gathering during Commencement-Reunion Weekend. We knew each other through spirited on-line exchanges via the medium of our personal computers and participation in the oc-alum e-mail discussion group. Already acquainted with one another's wit, counsel, ideas, commentary, Oberlin memories, good cheer, and other moods, we looked forward to meeting each other in person.

It was great! Heather Smith '96 hosted a group who represented a cross-section of an on-line crowd of nearly 250 alumni spanning all class years and stretching geographically from Israel to Thailand. Those who gathered on the lawn of Heather's Oberlin home were:

(standing) Andrew Heath '93, Andy Rowan '83 and his daughter Emma, yours truly, Kristin Peterson '72, hostess Heather Smith, (seated) Christina Chute '83, Erika Biga '96, and Andrew Cherry '93. Christina's partner, Deirdre McClure, and Andy Rowan's wife, Andrea Lehman '83, and their other daughter, Willa, were off somewhere when the photo was snapped.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HEATHER SMITH

We reunioners eagerly invite *all* Oberlin alumni to join us in cyberspace—every day! [Instructions for joining oc-alum are detailed in the "Electric Obie" notice on page 46 of the accompanying Summer 1997 *OAM*.] If you're only using your computer for word-processing, get a modem and join us. We all look forward to greeting you, too.
—Chuck Hubbell '47

What should the educational experience at Oberlin College be 25 years from now? Last fall President Nancy S. Dye initiated a long-range planning process—Oberlin 2020—designed not only to get the Oberlin community thinking and talking about that question, but to agree on broad directions that will guide our decision making in the coming years.

Faculty members involved in the planning reviewed the process—and some of the results—in a commencement symposium, "The Future of Oberlin College," sponsored by the Classes of 1961, 1962, and 1963. Moderated by associate dean and physics professor W. Bruce Richards '61, the panel included English professor W. Patrick Day '72, music-ed professor Catherine Jarjisian, and history professor Carol Lasser.

Nearly 700 people from the Oberlin community—town and gown together—took part in discussions last fall. The panelists said that the resulting shared framework for planning, *Broad Directions for Oberlin's Future*—included in the accompanying Summer 1997 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*—will be critical in forging new collaborations and in rethinking such issues as curriculum, interdisciplinary studies, and access to education. They agreed that, more than anything else, the process reaffirmed Oberlin's liberal arts mission—providing an education in learning how to learn.

the reunion will be

televised

Surrounded by former classmates, Nancy Giles '81 pirouetted and posed on the lawn of North Bowl for cameraman and fellow *Fox After Breakfast* news-team member Andrew Conti. The vixen-voiced announcer of the popular morning TV show had returned to Oberlin for reunion festivities—and to create a home-video. The video aired on *Fox After Breakfast's* Memorial Day broadcast, wrapping up its week-long series of segments about Nancy's preparation for her impending reunion.

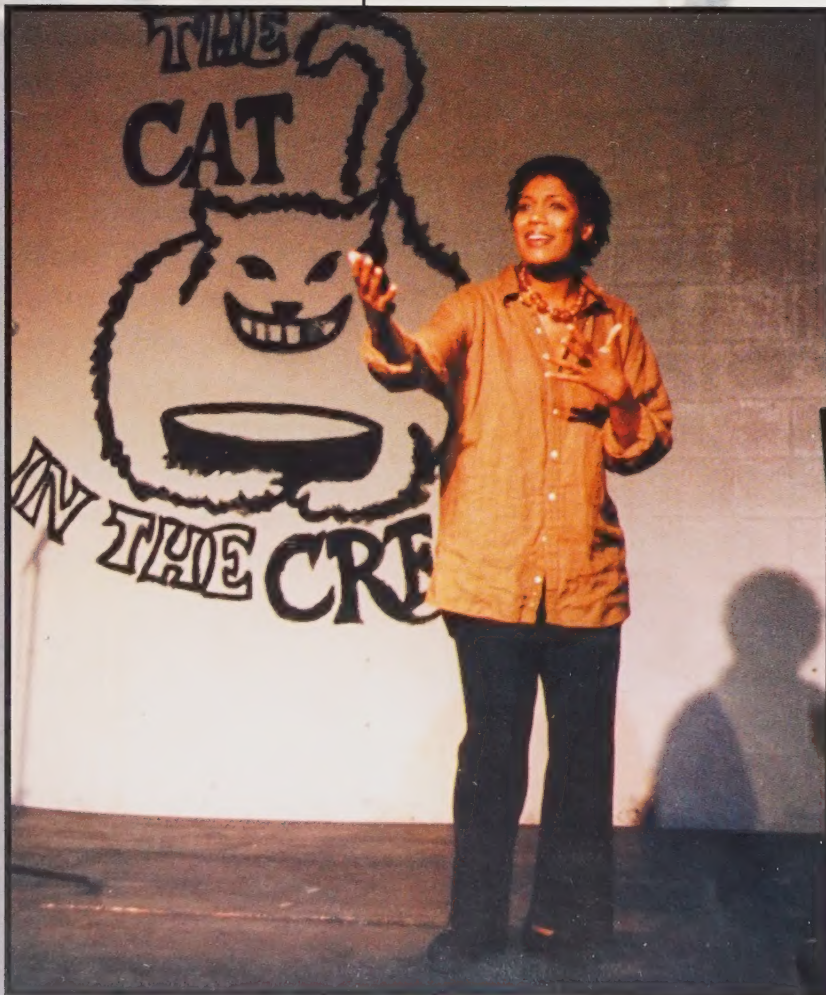
"I knew a couple of good friends would be here," said the statuesque 6'1" alumna, who first came to national attention for her role as Frankie, the mechanic-deejay on the highly-acclaimed TV series *China Beach*. "Things are really going well for me right now. And with the TV crew coming to film my reunion—well, what fool wouldn't want to come back?"

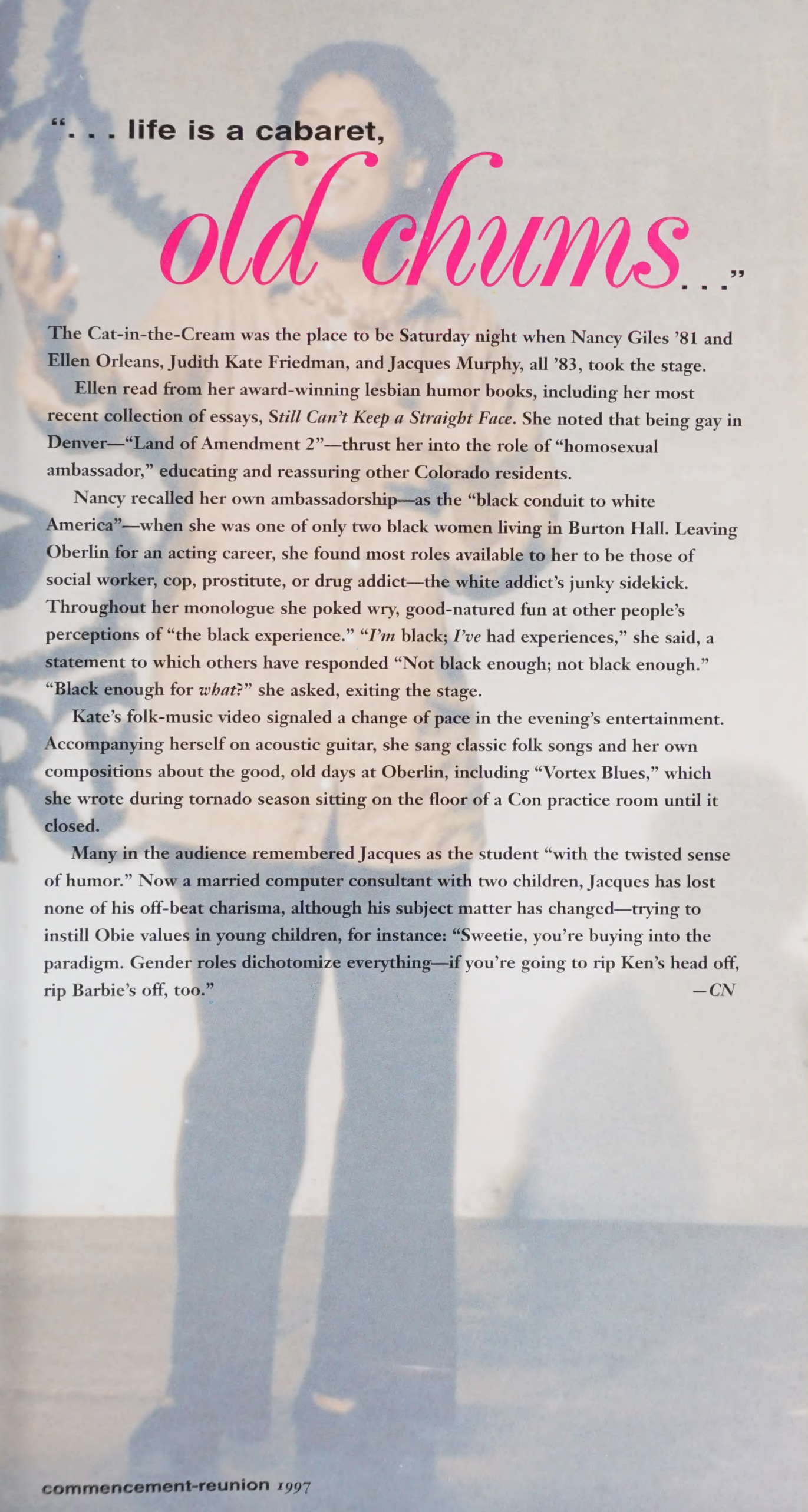
A character actress and voice-over artist, Nancy has racked up an impressive list of credits in the 16 years since she graduated with a creative-writing major. A regular on HBO's *Dream On*, Giles has also appeared in films such as *Angie*, *Big*, *Working Girl*, *New York Stories*, and *Fear of a Black Hat*. She has worked with Chicago's famed Second City troupe and is currently the voice in commercials for *The New York Times*, Motorola pagers, and Burger King.

As she quickly toured the halls of Burton, her former Oberlin residence, Nancy reflected on performing her one-woman show "The Wacky Side of Racism" during her cluster's Cat-in-the-Cream Cabaret.

"My experiences here shaped me in a lot of ways," she said. "It's a big thing for me, doing this show at Oberlin."

—KS





“... life is a cabaret,

old chums...”

The Cat-in-the-Cream was the place to be Saturday night when Nancy Giles '81 and Ellen Orleans, Judith Kate Friedman, and Jacques Murphy, all '83, took the stage.

Ellen read from her award-winning lesbian humor books, including her most recent collection of essays, *Still Can't Keep a Straight Face*. She noted that being gay in Denver—“Land of Amendment 2”—thrust her into the role of “homosexual ambassador,” educating and reassuring other Colorado residents.

Nancy recalled her own ambassadorship—as the “black conduit to white America”—when she was one of only two black women living in Burton Hall. Leaving Oberlin for an acting career, she found most roles available to her to be those of social worker, cop, prostitute, or drug addict—the white addict's junky sidekick. Throughout her monologue she poked wry, good-natured fun at other people's perceptions of “the black experience.” “*I'm black; I've had experiences,*” she said, a statement to which others have responded “Not black enough; not black enough.” “Black enough for *what?*” she asked, exiting the stage.

Kate's folk-music video signaled a change of pace in the evening's entertainment. Accompanying herself on acoustic guitar, she sang classic folk songs and her own compositions about the good, old days at Oberlin, including “Vortex Blues,” which she wrote during tornado season sitting on the floor of a Con practice room until it closed.

Many in the audience remembered Jacques as the student “with the twisted sense of humor.” Now a married computer consultant with two children, Jacques has lost none of his off-beat charisma, although his subject matter has changed—trying to instill Obie values in young children, for instance: “Sweetie, you're buying into the paradigm. Gender roles dichotomize everything—if you're going to rip Ken's head off, rip Barbie's off, too.”

—CN

Traditional Teaching—Not

Alumni crowded the King Building lecture hall to hear Professor of Environmental Studies David Orr and Danforth Professor of Biology David Benzing discuss Oberlin's latest venture—the Environmental Studies Center—a tradition-shattering living classroom scheduled to open in spring 1999. The symposium was sponsored by the Class of 1972.

Using architectural drawings, Orr detailed the features of the state-of-the-art facility that's already making national headlines. Designed as a living laboratory to teach students about ecological issues, the center will house classrooms and research facilities, and educational programs already underway in local public schools will extend the curriculum beyond the College and into the community. Orr announced that recent design changes will also enable the solar-powered building to actually create more energy than it will use.

Exterior landscaping—including a living wetlands system—will be maintained by students and will serve as both an outdoor laboratory and a functional extension of the building. A small pin oak forest will act as a tertiary system in waste-water treatment, while a small, food-producing farm will teach students new trends in sustainable agriculture.

Ground breaking for the center is planned for this fall. “To take us into the next millennium,” said Orr, “our students will need to know how to use energy and materials efficiently, grow food and fibers sustainably, process waste, preserve biodiversity, and do all this within a framework of social justice.”

“...remember, it’s a
surprise!”

So read the note at the bottom of invitations received by members of the 50th reunion class. The only couple who did *not* receive the kelly-green announcement of a special, secret gathering outside the Carnegie Building were Walter Sikes ’49 and Evelyn Hisey Sikes ’47, who spent the weekend celebrating not only their 50th reunion, but, simultaneously, their 50th wedding anniversary.

Family members and friends planned an informal surprise, complete with champagne toasts and cookies, at which they presented their gift to the couple—a gleaming, black, iron memorial bench and a bronze plaque, to be permanently placed at the entrance to the Carnegie Building.

A more appropriate means of celebrating Walter and Evelyn’s life together could not be imagined. They met, courted, and became engaged at Oberlin—Wally proposed to Evelyn on the steps of Keep Cottage. And they exchanged vows in Fairchild Chapel. The couple eventually settled in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where Wally is president of the Center for Creative Change and Evelyn is co-owner of an arts-and-crafts shop.

Was the element of surprise maintained? As they approached the site, led by a classmate in on the secret, the Sikes stopped in their tracks as they caught sight of daughter Linda. She was surely the very last person they expected to find in Oberlin on an overcast Sunday morning—considering she lives in Seattle—not to mention their other daughters, Becky McCashin and Debby Newsome; Becky’s husband, Pip; their granddaughter Naomi Sikes Gilbert, an Oberlin sophomore; and about 60 friends. They swiftly recovered their poise, however, and rose to the moment, greeting family and friends with bear hugs and wide smiles. —MC

PHOTO BY ALBERT PLAMBECK



Wally and Evelyn accept congratulations from family and friends.

Half-Century Club Welcomes Class of 1947

In a buzz of anticipation to see who would actually turn up at the Carnegie Building's Root Room dinner on Friday, 260 alert and well-polished alums found their places at tables of eight, and waited for classmates to join them. Among the most senior groups were four alums from the Class of 1927 celebrating their 70th reunion; several from the Class of 1932, gathered for their 65th; and a few each from the Classes of 1937, and 1942, celebrating their 60th and 66th reunions. Everyone else in the room was from the Class of 1947, there to mark the half-century that had passed since graduation, and a cheerful, noisy group they were as they exchanged life stories and memories of bygone days.

Perhaps the eldest person attending was Helen Martin Brown '27 whose home is in Honolulu. At 94, she continues to travel extensively, and has toured every continent except Antarctica. (Helen's classnote is in the accompanying Summer 1997 OAM).

Aside from catching up on the activities of their friends, new members were officially initiated into the Half Century Club, and were personally acknowledged by President Nancy S. Dye.

Shortly before their wedding day Wally and Evelyn posed for College photographer A. E. Princehorn near the Ladies' Grove entrance to the Arboretum. One of the photos from that session was published on the cover of the June 1947 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*.

presidential

address: the state of oberlin college



welcome and introduction

This is certainly a special weekend for each of you—whether you're a graduating senior, a proud parent, or an alum back for a reunion. And this is a special event: it's an opportunity for all of us, together, to hear at one time from our leader. By now I expect that most of you know or have met President Dye. She is, of course, a well-known, well-regarded scholar, an award-winning teacher, and an experienced and effective administrator. What makes her unique, however, are the personal qualities that she brings to her position. She is open and honest, with a deep sense of humor. She is a skilled consensus builder. She moves easily and comfortably among many different groups and people, both on- and off-campus. A dedicated listener, she genuinely cares about all members of our community, and what we think. Her clarity of thought and her extraordinary common sense enable her to bring light to complex issues and resolution to difficult problems. Importantly, she has focused on, articulated, and given life to Oberlin's essential character and values, and she has demonstrated her commitment to service and community by involving the entire Oberlin family—all of us—students, faculty, administrators, trustees and alumni, in setting Oberlin's future direction. We have a College and a president that give us pride. We are extraordinarily blessed to have our College led by this person. It is a great honor for me to present to you the 13th president of Oberlin College, Nancy Schrom Dye.

—Danette DiBiasio Wineberg '68
Alumni Association President

late

each summer Oberlin opens its academic year by welcoming our new freshmen and their families here in Finney Chapel. A few days later we hold an opening convocation here that brings many of us on this campus together as a community. And over Memorial Day weekend, as our alumni stream back to campus for reunions, I welcome the chance to address you here in this chapel again. I hope that we have begun a new tradition of the President addressing our returning alumni about the academic year just finished and about the state of the College more generally.

Members of the Oberlin classes from 1927 through 1983 are on campus this weekend. They join our soon-to-be-newest alumni, the members of the class of 1997. If all of you took hands and stretched out in a line, your lives would span a lot of history and a lot of future, from the beginning years of the twentieth century well into the twenty-first.

I want you to know how very much your enthusiasm, your intelligence, and your unwavering love of this College mean to Oberlin and to me. As a source of ideas, enthusiasm, understanding, and support, you are Oberlin's greatest resource. Your commitment is paramount to enabling Oberlin to maintain and enhance its preeminence among American colleges and universities, and to continue to be a model of educational excellence that other colleges and conservatories seek to emulate.

The Mainstream: In or Out?

I want to tell you, too, how very much I have enjoyed and profited from working closely with Danette Wineberg in her job as president of the Alumni Association over the past two years. She has done a superb job. As the alumni representative on the College's long-range planning advisory committee this year, she represented the interests and concerns of alumni exceedingly well, and in doing so she kept herself—and she is in her real life a very busy lawyer—driving back and forth on Interstate 90 from Ann Arbor to Oberlin and back again more times than she can remember over the past year. More personally, she has taught me a lot about how to work to bring people together to resolve difficult issues and to reach consensus. So I want to give a special word of thanks to Danette, because she's certainly done a great deal for this College.

keeping oberlin special

This has been an excellent year for Oberlin in many ways: in student and faculty achievement, in admissions, and in finances. I hope that you've noticed, as many people on campus have, the good spirit of the campus. It's also been a special year in that we've devoted ourselves to a broadly participatory long-range planning process. Each part of Oberlin—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the board of trustees—came together in focus groups, town meetings, planning teams, dorm raps, alumni gatherings, and a variety of other campus-wide and off-campus forums. Hundreds of Oberlinians deliberated on the two most important questions that underlay our planning effort this past year. First, what qualities of mission and programs and resources make Oberlin's educational excellence so remarkably distinctive and enduring? In short, what makes Oberlin so special? And second, how can Oberlin specifically adapt its distinctive mission and character in ways that best meet the needs of our students now, and those students who will be coming to us over the next twenty years or so?

We thought a lot about the fact that our students today will be living their entire adult lives in the twenty-first century. And while their need for a liberal education, and in the case of the conservatory, a professional music education, remain much the same as in generations past, their specific needs—what arts they will need from the liberal arts and how they are going to make their way as musicians in the twenty-first century—are very important issues for us to address specifically.

Our community-wide deliberations on these questions in the fall led to the formation of fourteen small planning teams of faculty, trustees, alumni, students, and staff. Each of these teams addressed a specific strategic issue related to Oberlin's future, and Oberlin's ability to adapt its mission and programs to meet our current and future students' needs. These teams ranged from ones devoted to academic program and curriculum, to sports, to campus diversity, and to residential life. Each of these teams produced a report, and those reports, along with the deliberations of the long-range planning advisory committee, make up the basis for the summary report contained at the beginning of the document *Broad Directions for Oberlin's Future: Report on the Oberlin College Planning Process in 1996-97*.

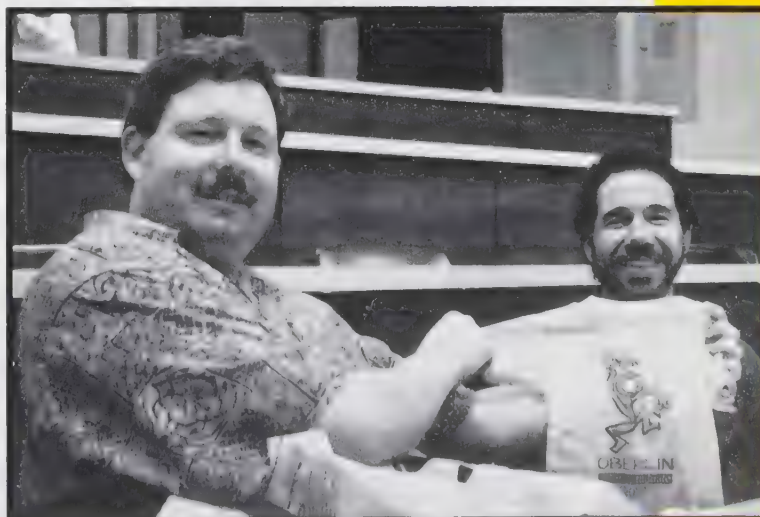
I'm happy to be able to report that at its meeting last week, after considerable discussion over the past month, Oberlin's faculty voted strongly in favor of accepting this report and implementing its recommendations. In June the Board of Trustees and the executive committee of the Alumni Council will also discuss the long-range planning report. I'm delighted by the fact that Oberlin now has a strong, optimistic, and clearly articulated sense of itself that is widely shared and understood. Our planning this year

That wasn't the theme of the 81-82-83 cluster's symposium, "The Meaning of Oberlin in Our Current Lives," only that of the first question. Moderator Dale Preston '83 posed questions to audience and panel members, inciting informal, free-wheeling exchanges.

Obies' assessments of their positions relative to the mainstream began rather predictably—before Oberlin: outside the mainstream; at Oberlin: in the mainstream; after Oberlin: outside the mainstream—though others' perspectives soon arose. Jennifer Hoock '83 revealed that even at Oberlin she felt "uncool." "It was bad enough that I shaved my legs," she confessed, but then she added to her discomfort by never "doing the co-op thing." Josh Searle-White '82 recalled a "conforming push" toward the radical that made many students feel like outsiders.

The question "Did you experience a defining moment at Oberlin?" was slow to generate response, until people had a chance to mull it over. One alumna remembered filling with pride and determination to succeed after opening Oberlin's financial-aid award letter and seeing that "Oberlin thought enough of me to invest in me."

As for the final question: "Was Oberlin worth it, moneywise?" the answer was a unanimous, unhesitating yes. Oberlin's "total package"—the culture, the faculty, the classes—provide a priceless education. Yet many in the room nodded sympathetically when Neal Hartsough '82 answered the question: "For me, at \$12,000 a year—yes. For my children, at \$28,000 and rising, I'll have to think about it long and hard."





has resulted in a powerful affirmation of each of the distinctive elements of Oberlin's mission—our intellectual seriousness, and academic rigor and excellence, our artistic excellence and the vibrancy of our splendid campus arts community, our belief that the best undergraduate education is an education in social engagement, and our long-standing commitment to educational access and to social and intellectual diversity. Our planning process has also resulted in a strong affirmation of our mission as a preeminent liberal arts college, and as a conservatory of music devoted to providing young musicians with the best possible professional music education. Both, we believe, will remain the very best kind of preparation that Oberlin can provide to our future students.

We have also reaffirmed Oberlin's identity as a residential college, where education inside and outside the classroom and studio takes place in relationship, face-to-face. We realize that our identity as a residential educational community will be evermore important in the coming decades. Our identity as a residential college distinguishes us and our mission from new forms of mass education—the now much ballyhooed “virtual-university.” We also believe that only by remaining a residential educational community can we provide the most important kind of learning that can take place in this kind of community, learning to live together. Our planning has also made clear that Oberlin feels a deep need to strengthen its sense of community through every aspect of living and learning here.

building on our strengths

So where do we go from here? Our greatest material challenge in maintaining our intellectual distinctiveness and educational excellence lies in the natural sciences. Oberlin's excellence over the past century has been very much bound up with science. We invented what is now called student-faculty research, with the great partnership of Professor of Chemistry Frank Jewett and Charles Martin Hall, Class of 1885. We have long compiled the most impressive record of any undergraduate institution in producing scientists. Just last week the National Science Foundation reported that Oberlin still ranks first among the top 25 baccalaureate colleges in producing graduates who completed science and engineering doctorates between 1991 and 1995. Between those years 260 did so. Over many generations we have also attracted and nurtured one of the most talented science faculties anywhere.

Our biggest science challenge in the immediate future is this: our science teaching and research facilities are seriously outdated. They do not lend themselves to adapting to the profound changes taking place in the ways we teach and learn science today. What is more, our distinguished science faculty will be retiring in considerable numbers over the next five to seven years. To maintain our scientific excellence we must create new, state-of-the-art science facilities for teaching and research that will enable us to attract the very best students and new faculty, and that will enable them to carry on our traditions of brilliantly educating future scientists. Over the next few years you will hear a lot from me, our new Dean of the College Clayton Koppes, our trustees, and our science faculty and students about our need for the new science complex that we want to build by the earliest years of the twenty-first century.

A second challenge we must address to maintain our educational excellence is the recruitment and nurturing of new faculty. Over the next few years a large percentage of our senior faculty will retire. Much of our planning this year was devoted to thinking about the faculty of the future and how we can best go about building it. We are particularly concerned about recruiting and developing a faculty with the qualities of mind that underlie excellent undergraduate teaching, and



Colloquium Showcases Students

the willingness and ability to establish strong and dynamic relationships between students and professors. We will also be doing a great deal over the next few years to make our curriculum and our academic department structures far more responsive to interdisciplinary modes of teaching and learning.

Our faculty just approved an international-studies concentration. Not, mind you, a new degree program with a proliferation of new courses and new faculty and new resource needs, but rather a pulling together of the already great resources for furthering internationalism at



Oberlin—Shansi; faculty expertise across the humanities, foreign languages, and social sciences; already rich departmental offerings that can be better integrated and coordinated; a cosmopolitan faculty, staff, and student body—to put together a concentration that will meet the growing international interests of our students and faculty. We look to change our curriculum and our programs more along such lines, rather than saying “ah, we have to build something entirely new.” We plan to look to the current strengths we have, and ways to build upon them.

Our planning process has also led us to a new appreciation of how remarkable the traditions of artistic excellence that have long characterized Oberlin are, and the current vibrancy of the arts now. Many of you have told me that the most exciting and life-changing aspect of your own Oberlin education was learning how to really look at a work of art, or really listen to a serious work of music. This continues to be true today. At the same time, many of our students come to Oberlin today because they create art.

Through our planning, we have affirmed the central importance of the Allen Memorial Art Museum to the excellence of Oberlin, and we have affirmed its need for restoration. We have also begun to explore new and exciting ways for the college and the conservatory to work together to meet our college students’ needs for music education, and our conservatory students’ needs for a broad, coherent liberal education. We look to integrating our arts programs, and encouraging even more collaboration among our student and faculty artists.

You will also hear a lot from Oberlin over the next few years about the ways in which educational excellence and diversity go together. Oberlin’s excellence has always been bound up with its commitment to diversity. We were the first college anywhere to espouse the educational philosophy that the best way to provide an excellent learning environment was to bring young people of different genders, races, and socioeconomic circumstances together. The reasons for our doing this more than 160 years ago were very different than our reasons for believing in this educational philosophy now. But the fact remains that Oberlin’s diversity has always been a hallmark of its educational excellence. There is every societal and demographic indication that diversity will be more important in defining educational excellence in our future than it has ever been in our past. Our planning process has confirmed for us that we must build upon our heritage and think clearly and generously about how we can continue our commitment to educational access, and how we can create a genuinely pluralistic academic community that has as its goal enabling young people to learn to live together.

I look forward to sharing with you, through the pages of the alumni magazine this summer, the report, *Broad Directions for Oberlin’s Future*. I think that you will find it an exciting and challenging vision for the College. And I look forward to sharing with you all of the ways in which we are moving to making our goals realities.

Recognizing students’ achievements was the impetus behind a colloquium, sponsored by Oberlin Lambda Alumni (formerly Oberlin Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alumni), at which the 1996-1997 recipients of the Andy Cemelli Research Grant and the Norm Robertson Research Prize discussed their projects.

The Robertson Prize, which honors completed projects related to the lambda community, went to senior David Berman for his project, “For Better or Worse: The Gay Movement and the Problem of Gay Marriage.” The Cemelli grant, which supports proposed projects, had two winners—juniors Nicole Hurt and Andrew LaVallee. Nicole intends to make her project, “Bad Barracks Beulahs to Blues Divas: An Analysis of Black Queer Women in History and Literature,” the nucleus of her senior honors thesis. Andrew examined how lambda community members are affected by racial and sexual identities in his project, “Intersecting Difference: People of Color, Identities, and Communities.”



the class of 2001

I told you that this has been an excellent year in other ways as well. I want to talk in particular about admissions. This year more than 3,900 high-school seniors applied for the 620 places available in the College of Arts and Sciences' Class of 2001. One thousand eighty-five young musicians applied for the 95 new places in the Conservatory of Music. We admitted 61 percent of those who applied to the college, down from an admit rate of 64 percent last year and 72 percent in each of the preceding three years. This year's admit rate is the lowest since 1989. We still have a way to go in building the size of our college applicant pool and in continuing to lower the admit rate, but we are pleased by the process we have made this year and last. The conservatory admitted 30 percent of its applicants—the most selective that the conservatory has ever been. SAT scores and high-school grades remain as strong as they were last year, which are strong, indeed. Median SATs are 670 verbal and 640 math—exactly what they were last year. There are 31 valedictorians among our College of Arts and Sciences freshmen and 43 National Merit Scholars, up from 34 in last year's entering class. One of our admissions goals is to increase the number of alumni children matriculated at Oberlin. This fall 35 alumni children will enroll as freshmen in the College of Arts & Sciences, up from 24 last year. This is the largest number of legacies in an entering class that we have had in well over a decade.

Oberlin seeks the most academically and artistically talented young men and women from all of American society, and from all around the world. Next year we will count among our entering freshmen young people from some of the finest public high schools and independent preparatory schools in the United States. Schools sending us the most students include Interlochen Arts Academy; Phillips Academy, Andover; the Bronx High School of Science; Buckingham, Brown and Nichols School in Boston; Friends Seminary in New York; Ladue Horton Watkins High School in St. Louis; Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.; and Berkeley High School in Berkeley, California. We also welcome into our newest class students from public high schools in America's inner cities, such as Thomas Jefferson High School in Cleveland; LaGuardia High School in Brooklyn [really in Brooklyn?]; Whitney Young High School in Chicago; and Callinga [check spelling] High School in Los Angeles. Our entering class has members whose parents and grandparents have graduated from Oberlin and 83 students who are the first in their families to attend college. True to Oberlin's traditions, the Class of 2001 will be diverse and cosmopolitan. Approximately 25 percent of our freshmen are African-American, Asian-American, and Latino. Thirty percent of our conservatory class and 5 percent of the college class are international students. They come from Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, and Turkey. We have every reason to believe that each of the students we have admitted can thrive at Oberlin and profit from an Oberlin education.

equity, excellence, and generosity

We know that students' intellectual and artistic talents do not correlate with a family's economic means. This was brought home to us very forcefully this year in the conservatory. A brilliant young horn player applied for and was accepted to the conservatory, and will be

coming to the conservatory next fall. Our faculty say that he is without doubt one of the best young musicians they have ever heard audition, and they are already predicting that he will be one of the best musicians in the world. When he wrote us that he was coming to Oberlin he said "I can bring to Oberlin only my hands and my heart."

Oberlin, like every independent college and university, has been looking at an ever widening gap between what we have been





and government grants covered the full cost of Oberlin's scholarship program. This is no longer true. Most of our scholarship budget is provided by annual giving and annual operating revenues. As the cost of higher education has escalated, Oberlin and every other leading independent college have made ever-increasing commitments of their resources to scholarship assistance.

If we are to be a model of academic and artistic excellence and a richly diverse college; if we are to maintain Oberlin's founding commitment to providing access to higher education to the most talented students regardless of socioeconomic circumstance; if, in short, we are to realize our long-range planning goal of equity, excellence, and generosity, we must continue our commitment to our scholarship program. At the same time, we must continue to find ways to keep the rate of tuition increase as low as we possibly can. Both last year and this we have brought down the tuition increase: last year to 4 percent, this coming year to 3.8 percent. These are the lowest tuition increases at Oberlin in more than 30 years. We have been able to do this because of the hard work of the entire campus last year in eliminating our structural deficit. We have been able to do this because of the good management and fine performance of our endowment, which now stands at \$360 million. Most important, we have been able to improve our scholarship and financial-aid packages, and pull back on our tuition increases because of the support you, our alumni, give to this College. It delights me to be able to tell you that by the end of last week—the end of the work day on Friday, May 23—Oberlin's alumni and friends had already contributed more than \$17 million to the College this year. We can now state confidently that thanks to your annual giving, planned giving, bequest intentions, and major gifts, that by June 30 of this year we will reach the highwater mark in Oberlin fundraising: we will break the previous record high of \$18.1 million raised in a given fiscal year. We are profoundly grateful to you for this support.

Fred Francis said recently on NBC Nightly News that Oberlin is nearly perfect. I liked hearing this.

We're not perfect. We stand a long way from perfection, but we are doing well. Oberlin has great faith in its students, and a long tradition of investing in them intellectually, personally, and financially. We have great faith in our faculty and our ability to bring the very best young scholars, musicians, and artists to teach here. We have enormous faith in you, our alumni. And we have great faith in our mission and in the strength of our character as a college that will always strive successfully for equity, excellence, and generosity.

Thank you very much.

—President Nancy S. Dye
Presented May 25, 1997

"He Wanted the Best You Had"

Jim Lindsay's ('82) remembrance of what Professor of Creative Writing Stuart Frieibert wanted from his students echoed throughout Saturday night's Alumni Writers' Reading. The creative writing program sponsored the event to honor its founder and director, who retired in May after 36 years at Oberlin. Marking the occasion wasn't easy, said Professor David Young; Stuart's colleagues knew he'd pooh-pooh a formal reception with equally formal tributes. But a reading in his honor by his former students . . .



Those who couldn't return asked others to read for them. Denny Hoberman Louie '75 sent the ultimate facsimile (left) complete with assembly instructions. Most readers shared memories of their days under Stu-

art's tutelage, eliciting thunderous laughter—with some of the most resonant guffaws emanating from Stuart's vicinity. Class of 1986 novelist Kelly Dwyer's recollection of the first day of Creative Writing 101 set heads nodding knowingly. "If your friends ask you to go to Campus for ice cream," Stuart told the fledgling writers, "you say, 'No, I have to write,'" a mantra they were to repeat to almost every invitation. Dwyer told her roommate, who responded, "What are you going to write about, how lonely you are?"

None of the readers left the podium—or let their designated reader do so—without looking their former teacher in the eye and thanking him. One-time visiting student Tom Andrews wrote poignantly of the enduring effect of his Oberlin semester: "Time's wallop *means* more, includes more, is more various and interesting, because of your mentorship and friendship, Stuart."

*“To think
in the
plural is to
create—not
destroy—
unity.”*

pluralism, power,

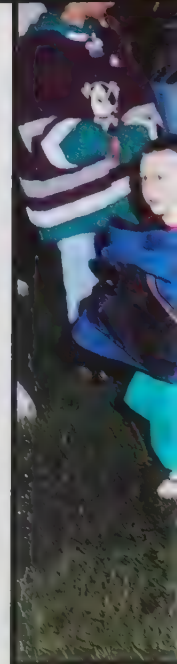
passion

Her text was the story of old Abraham and Sarah, their son Isaac, and their servant Hagar, who also bore Abraham a son and whom he drove into the desert. Her message was one of tolerance, faith, and love.

In her baccalaureate address, “Pluralism, Power, and Passion,” writer, lecturer, and pastoral minister Jane Redmont ’72 drew upon an ancient story common to three great religions to demonstrate that modern cultural diversity and social inequality need not be barriers to compassion and unity. Power, she said, is part of the reality of today’s pluralism, because all people do not have equal access to health care, education, or jobs.

“We must ask ourselves, who is not in this picture?” said Jane. “Whose voice is not being heard? To think in the plural is to create—not destroy—unity.”

A PhD candidate at Berkeley’s Graduate Theological Union, Jane is well-acquainted with issues of social justice. The first woman chaplain at St. Paul’s Catholic Center in Minneapolis, she was social-justice minister at Boston’s St. Paulist Center, and has worked as a consultant with agencies addressing the causes and consequences of urban poverty. —KS



illumination night

Every year Oberlinians wonder if they'll make it through Commencement-Reunion Weekend without a soaking. Those on campus this year almost made it; the skies that threatened all day Saturday let loose on Sunday, turning Illumination Night's Social on the Square into a Fete in the Tent. But the rain didn't dampen the revelers' spirits, nor those of the performers—members of the Commencement Band and the Can Consortium.



Preserving a Treasure Trove

"Don't save any of my wretched letters," Helen Finney Cochran Cox wrote to her son, William, in the late 1800s "They may cause mischief somewhere."

Helen's descendants paid her no heed, and Oberlin College Archivist Roland Baumann made no attempt to hide his utter delight at such filial disobedience when he introduced the Class of 1942's session "Sharing a Family's History with Oberlin College," led by Ellen Woodbury MacDaniels Speers '42.

The descendants of four families intimately connected with Oberlin—the Finneys, Allens, Cochrans, and Coxes—Ellen and her sister, the late Carolyn Rudd MacDaniels Miller '47, arranged to donate the papers, many of which resided atop a ping-pong table in Carolyn's basement for several years, to the Archives. The more than 3,500 items are a "treasure trove, as we say in history circles," said Roland.

Ellen answered classmates' questions and talked of the themes that struck her, among them the constant threat of disease and death in the early 19th century. "Her shrieks were enough to have melted the heart of a stoic," wrote a brokenhearted mother in 1812 of her month-and-a-half-old child's death from the mumps. Ellen marveled at the moxie of the women—women who lived in an era popularly considered unremittently repressive. And she noted the correspondence between Civil War generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Jacob D. Cox (of Cox Administration Building fame).

Upon reading their descriptions of camp life, battle strategies, and the era's personalities, a PhD candidate researching General Cox shouted ecstatically, "This is all new stuff!" He might have been speaking for everyone interested in early Oberlin.



1997

commencement

The rain that drove Illumination Night into the tent dissipated in time for Commencement 1997—to the great relief of the 600-plus members of the Class of 1997 and the more than 5,000 parents, alumni, and friends who converged on campus for the event.



Philip Hanawalt '54, internationally known leader in DNA repair, received an honorary Doctor of Science degree. The work he has done at Stanford as professor in the university and medical school has profound implications in mutagenesis, environmental carcinogenesis, and risk assessment.



Oberlin police chief Robert "BJ" Jones received the Distinguished Service to the Community Award for 30 years of diligent work for the citizens of Oberlin, Lorain County, and Ohio. Chief Jones serves on the boards of numerous law-enforcement and community organizations.



Grammy-winning soprano Edit Wiens '75 received an honorary Doctor of Music degree. Professor of voice at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf, she has performed with orchestras from around the world.



on *social* change and *politics*



The core of Allan Henry Spear's message to the Class of 1997 centered on remaining as involved in causes "out there in the real world" as they did on campus. Allan, a member of the Class of 1958, received an honorary doctor of laws degree before delivering the address at Oberlin's Commencement Exercises.

Outside the campus, students may find less passion for the causes that consume them at Oberlin, leading them to wonder "where have all the causes gone," he projected. But the times are not really so tranquil as some would believe—social prejudice is still rampant, environmental issues still demand our attention, kids still need our help.

A Minnesota state senator first elected in 1972, Allan is the nation's longest-serving openly gay male legislator. Reelected to his post seven times, he has worked to pass legislation protecting the interests of the poor, the abused, and the neglected.

"Bringing about change is much harder and slower than you think," he told the graduates, and cautioned that they shouldn't let the effort get them down. "Be political and maintain interaction with others," he urged, because the reason "things go wrong" is our "failure to relate to one another, a failure to listen."

—MC



What They Teach and Why

Recent changes in teaching, learning, and curriculum at Oberlin were the focus of "What We Teach and Why We Teach It," a symposium sponsored by the Class of 1942. Presentations by professors David Benzing, biology; William Norris, sociology; and Suzanne Gay, East Asian studies and associate dean, launched the discussion, which was moderated by Dean of the College Clayton Koppes.

One of the topics panelists and audience members discussed was how traditional teaching and learning in the sciences—especially biochemistry, neuroscience, and environmental studies—is enhanced by preprofessional mentorships and internships. They considered how increasing globalization and recent political developments in Europe and Latin America have influenced the social sciences' focus on understanding social process, and how those developments have fostered a new curricular concentration in international studies. The increasingly interdisciplinary nature of scholarship in the humanities was a popular topic, as was an examination of how advances in computer technology can enrich teaching and learning—a question the new Oberlin Center for Technologically Enhanced Teaching (OCTET) will concentrate on as it seeks to support computer-based learning in all fields.

"Students today know things we didn't know 50 years ago," said Clayton. "Our job is to help them stay competitive in an increasingly complex world."

champagne

luncheon:

rain can't burst its bubbles

The annual Champagne Luncheon took place under the tent in Wilder Bowl on Sunday, despite occasional bursts of drenching rain that did nothing to dampen the spirits of those who braved muddy shoes and damp paper plates to attend. Once seated with their classmates under the array of bold banners stretching from one end of the tent to the other, the mood remained euphoric as reunion weekend drew to a close.

Welcoming Class of 1997



Jim Truitt, president of the Class of 1947, welcomed the graduating class of 1997 as the newest members of the association. Alumni Association president Danette DiBiasio Wineberg '68 recounted the association's extensive outreach activities on and off campus during the past year, and presented its awards to deserving alums.

A Certificate of Appreciation went to Eric Nilson '82 for his many contributions. A former Alumni Association president, he formed and chaired Oberlin's Gay Alumni Task Force, the recommendations of which led to the formation of Oberlin's first, and very successful, affiliate group, OLGBA, now Oberlin Lambda Association (OLA).

Paul "Tito" Sciortino, Jr. '90 and Andy Rowan '83 received Certificates of Appreciation for creating and maintaining (respectively) oc-alum, the electronic discussion list for Obies. Tito was honored for having the vision to see the list's potential, and Andy for monitoring it with firmness, sensitivity, and humor.

The Alumni Medal, the association's highest honor, went to Carl T. Rowan '47 for his outstanding advocacy of Oberlin's values. Besides his service as an alumni-elected trustee, he was recognized for his leadership in Project Excellence and for the influence he has had on



Eric Nilson

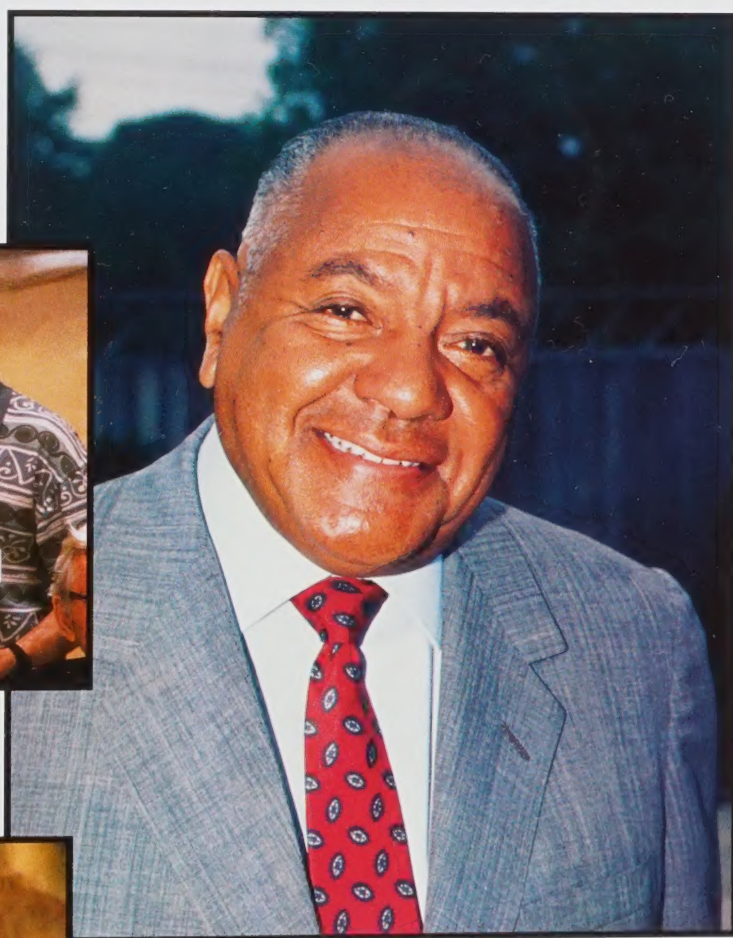


many minority college-bound students from the D.C. area. His frequent visits to Oberlin have inspired faculty and students alike with his “philosophy of education and access,” read the citation.

After presenting the association’s awards, Danette received one of her own—an Oberlin College chair presented by Bill Perlik ’48, chair of the board of trustees, for her hard work and dedication.

After the classes presented their reunion gifts, President Nancy S. Dye addressed the group; Bill recognized the thousands of hours devoted to Oberlin by alumni volunteers; and the Oberlin College choir led the Oberlin Songfest, with every voice under the tent booming out all the verses of *Ten Thousand Strong*. —MC

Andy Rowan



Carl Rowan



Words, Words, Words

Literature, he postulates, is the result of the war between words and expression. Poetry is the language of revenge.

No one could know words better than Dewey Ganzel, professor of English at Oberlin since 1958. Retiring this year, Ganzel looked back at a lifetime of literature in his talk, “Words, Words, Words,” sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

“I get drunk easily on words,” he said. “My professional life has been cabined, cribbed, and confined by words. But words have a characteristic way of breaking away from the ideas they are meant to express.”

Dewey has seen more “hand-to-hand combat” with words than most. He has read over three-quarters of a million words each year during the past nine years alone—and those were just his students’ papers.

But in his personal war with words, Dewey has clearly been the victor—and his students the winners. “Authors who take us to the limits of words let us see the possibilities,” he concluded. And his audience clearly agreed.

